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ABSTRACT

Over the last 10 years, there has been considerable expansion of the Navajo Language Program at Navajo Community College (NCC). The guiding principle for this development has been that the seminal work be done by Navajos, in Navajo, for a Navajo audience, and for Navajo purposes. Navajos who speak Navajo have a richness of resource and an access to intuition about grammaticality and acceptability unmatched elsewhere. Navajo-speaking Navajos also have an understanding of the Navajo community, and an appreciation of the need for certain foci in research, curriculum writing, and composition. Besides being symbolically important, doing the work in Navajo forces constant coinage and circumlocution in the language. When the talk is in English, the group becomes more disjointed, in part because English speakers' discourse structure tends to constrain what is said. Giving the Navajo audience primacy forces authors to be more careful, because this audience is the most critical, has the most at stake, and is the most interested. Doing the work for Navajo purposes tends to prioritize activities of an applied and practical nature. With these efforts, and associated research projects, NCC has developed a forum of teachers, students, and other scholars who rigorously investigate and create in Navajo. Authority increasingly resides with Navajos, and the functions of promoting and perpetuating the language come to the forefront. Navajo Language Program goals, principles, and courses are described. (TD)

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The Navajo Language Program

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THE NAVAJO LANGUAGE PROGRAM AT NAVAJO COMMUNITY COLLEGE - CONTEXT AND COLLABORATION

Prologue

There is a pervasive tension that shapes this piece. By request, and for important purposes, it is being written to a non-Navajo audience. Though the non-Navajo audience is certainly not homogenous, it is the incongruities in interests, needs, and knowledge that distinguish the Navajo audience from the non-Navajo that concern me. The ambiguity and manipulation ubiquitous in Navajo/Anglo relations promote misunderstanding and mistrust, of motive and message. A major claim of this piece is that the vitality of an intellectual forum for advanced work on Navajo (or any indigenous language) must recognize the absolute primacy of the speakers of Navajo as audience. In adherence to this, I am here writing through a Navajo audience first, and then to a broader audience.

Introduction

Over the last ten years, there has been considerable expansion and enrichment of the Navajo Language Program (NLP) at Navajo Community College (NCC). The result of the efforts of several dozen collaborators has been progress and securing of gains in every major element of the NLP. This progress has allowed NCC to more fully exercise it's role in the promotion of the Navajo Language on the Navajo Nation. Of course, this work has been done in concert with and upon a foundation of scholarship about Navajo that has been ongoing for over a century, and there has been constant and rich work done on Navajo at NCC since its beginning in 1968. However, it is this most recent period that I will focus upon.

The guiding principle for this development has been simple to conceptualize, and profound in its impact. At the very core of the best work that can conceivably be done on Navajo there must lie a forum of scholars. This group must develop a synergy of critical interplay that values all community voices and concerns and must follow a clear and difficult path: the seminal work will be done by Navajos, in Navajo, for a Navajo audience, and for Navajo purposes. Hereafter, I will refer to this formula as that of the Core Forum. Advances have been made at NCC in promoting this Core Forum, but the situation is still evolving, and maintenance and promotion of the Core Forum should always be pursued. Only with the goal of

maintaining the primacy of this type of work are we striving for the best. as academics.

The number of issues that anyone may study about Navajo is, as with any language, practically inexhaustible. Further, one must distinguish between the fields of Navajo Language and Navajo Linguistics, though there are significant areas of overlap and cross-fertilization. There is room in these fields for everyone. Of course, the work is difficult, and novices must undergo extensive preparation before producing work that is not undermined by serious errors. This is most markedly true for those who do not speak Navajo, or are unfamiliar with its structure, and the lives and talk of Navajos. The academic careers of Navajo language and linguistics scholars follow one of three paths: (a) they do inaccurate work, and pawn it off on the large and ignorant audience that wants to be told about the Indians, (b) they limit their field of inquiry to arcane matters, maintaining an etic accuracy by studying minutia, or (c) they define the focus of their work in collaboration with a more expert and Navajo-local forum and expose their work, at minimum, to this forum. NCC's task, in the Navajo *Language* Program has been, and is, to build and nurture this Core Forum, (1) by Navajos, (2) in Navajo, (3) for a Navajo audience, and (4) for Navajo purposes.

(1) Work done by Navajos who speak Navajo is informed by a richness of resource and an access to intuition about grammaticality and acceptability unmatched elsewhere. Both for synthesizing and analyzing Navajo, those who speak Navajo fluently and articulately have tremendously valuable tools available. Any forum that does not include informed, collaborative, critical input from Navajo speaking Navajos is unacceptably vulnerable to inaccuracy. This is true of all Navajo language forums, without exception, and probably true of all but the most radically delimited Navajo linguistics work.

A further sort of knowledge that Navajo-speaking Navajos have is an understanding of the Navajo community, and an appreciation of its openness to and need for certain foci in research, curriculum writing, and composition. Decisions about what work is to be done that are made with this knowledge are more likely to produce work that will be used, that will draw response, that has permanence. This permanence is one of ongoing impact, and also one of ongoing presence of authors, since non-Navajos come and go on the Navajo Nation, but Navajos stay, or at least always return. It is this sort of work that nurtures a Core Forum.

(2) The second element of the Core Forum is that primacy be given to work conducted in Navajo. This is a difficult matter, and one that has been realized only partially (though in more and more

settings). Of course, symbolically this is important. Those who work on Navajo are often the most committed and visible champions of the language, promoting its perpetuation. Promoting Navajo while conducting one's professional life in spoken or written English is inherently contradictory. A related benefit to carrying out Navajo language work in Navajo is that it forces some constant coinage and circumlocution in the language. This growing edge of the language is in and of itself the most vital part of the organism.

Of greater importance is the fact that when talk and writing are in Navajo a social solidarity and synergy arises from the specificity of audience identification that speakers and writers make. Navajo language professionals on the Navajo Nation are struggling with the ongoing demise of the language, while working at perhaps its most significant growing edge. In general they are not in a position to use any resources on what could prove to be marginal matters, or to be distracted by topics possibly more taxonomic than physiological. Theirs is a forum that needs, most of all, ideas, energy, and creative problem-solving talk. When the talk is in English, this same group (and the others who then can join it and often dominate talk) immediately becomes more disjointed. Some of the reasons are social - a Navajo speaking Navajo certainly presents a different social self to other Navajos than does the same person when speaking English. Other reasons have to do with the structure of discourse - when talk or writing are conducted in English the presupposition pools, remarkability set, and general background knowledge of English speakers tend to constrain or propose what is said.

(3) The third element of the Core Forum is that the most seminal work to be done on Navajo is addressed primarily to a Navajo audience. Frankly this is the hardest audience to address, the one most willing to withhold approval until its standards are met, the one with the most to gain or lose, and the one most consistently patient and interested. This audience has a permanence, not of a year or two, but of a lifetime and across generations. They have time to reflect (even months, and years) before responding (compare this to the five minutes given for questions at professional conferences).

Giving this audience primacy has radical results. First, it shapes what is said. In some matters of a more technical or arcane nature, an academic must make more preparatory remarks than would be made to a graduate linguistics seminar at most universities. Concurrently, authors must take greater care, especially with the accuracy of data and glosses, but also with claims about processes. It is always a rigorous exercise to face an audience that can rapidly generate counterexamples.

To the extent that work on Navajo is for purposes of the academy, such focusing will also be beneficial. When small slices of a language are carried away to be presented as data to naive audiences, relatively untested work may outlive its usefulness. When a large community of native speakers, with sophisticated analytical knowledge about the language, are a sine qua non of critical audiences, the forum has a rigor that is of an entirely different nature. Further, as discussed next, the topics considered to be reasonable ones for research come to be of a different nature, a radical departure from present practice, and maybe the most needed one.

It will be argued that focusing all work on a Navajo audience might prevent important advances from being made, advances that can only be made by addressing a narrow, expert audience. First, no claim is being made that the Core Forum should be the only forum. In contrast, the claim is that if the work does not eventually impact that forum it will be ephemeral. Further, although our attention in scholarship (indeed, the only thing that many will consider scholarship) is often on the most intellectually complicated and groundbreaking work, such work, to be accurate and meaningful, must always have a broad and deep foundation of perhaps more mundane but equally valuable scholarship. For example, work in syntax not based in thorough understanding of descriptive grammar can often be unbalanced.

A further contention, of racism or reverse discrimination, must also be addressed. In positing the primacy of Navajo authorship, there is no intent of exclusiveness or an exercise of blind racial politics (though the perception is not infrequent). Certainly there are non-Navajos who have access to resources and expertise that many Navajos do not. Even in cases in which there are Navajos with specialized expertise, often they are spread too thin. If for example it is important that there be instruction or research in articulatory phonetics to help ESL or NSL teachers, the key issues are of quality work and accessible results, whoever does the work.

(4) The fourth element of the Core Forum is that the work be for Navajo purposes. One compelling reason for this is the circumstance of "brain drain" that often pulls the most capable Navajo scholars away from crucially important work. There is no intent here to delegitimize any particular area of Navajo language work, but there is a necessity to prioritize. For example, those projects that tend to attempts to reverse the decline of Navajo deserve more attention and resources than those which investigate Navajo as data for other broader concerns. A second rationale for

taking Navajo purposes to be primary is that these purposes are often of an applied nature, and it is in the application (or re-explanation) of findings that deficiencies are discovered and improvements made.

The ideas of a Core Forum have guided the development of the Navajo Language Program for years, and will continue to do so. However, the reality of day-to-day problem solving has often demanded that the agendas of other perspectives be addressed and followed. This is as it should be, since the practical task of institutionalizing quality Navajo Language work at NCC should never be threatened by the rigidity of ideology. The extent to which the principles of the Core Forum have been adhered to or set aside can be examined by reference to the more concrete details of the NLP that follow.

CONTEXT

Navajo is spoken by about 80,000 people, in New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah. About 8,000 - of these are older people, nearly or completely monolingual in Navajo. Though over one-half of the Navajo children in a recent study did not speak any Navajo, there are still thousands of Navajo children who are fluent. There are more Navajo speakers than speakers of any other indigenous language of North America. Navajo is of the Athabaskan language family. Of the thirty Athabaskan languages still spoken, its closest sister languages are the Apache languages of the Southwest. It is a morphologically complex polysynthetic language a difficult one for English monolinguals to learn.

Of the lexical categories of Navajo, the verb is by far the most complex, morphologically. Although the noun may, on occasion, rival the verb in complexity, this is merely in those cases in which the noun is a nominalized verb. The Navajo verb subsumes, among other things, the tense and aspect markers, the pronoun subjects and objects, a large number of adverbial elements (especially those concerned with direction of movement), incorporated postpositions and nouns, and markers for repetition, plurality, and rhythm of activity (as expressed in the seriative, semelfactive, and reversionary prefixes). Thus, a single Navajo verb can have as many as ten morphemes. Syntactically, Navajo is SOV in word order, and the phonological component of the language differs from that of English in perhaps two-thirds of its features. This incongruity of Navajo and English, and the differences

between the two cultures, make Navajo hard for English speakers to learn, and vice-versa. Further, the non-European structure of Navajo has made the grammatical portion of work on language curriculum a ground-up effort, with little analogy to grammatical school curriculum elsewhere.

The Navajo Nation is about the size of West Virginia. Navajos have been here for at least 700 years, and in many cases one family has been in one place for several hundred years. In general, life is extremely rural. Thirty percent of Navajo homes have no electricity; fifty percent do not have running water. Subsistence stock raising, farming, traditional arts, and herbal and traditional medicine are important economic and cultural features of Navajo life. Navajo people are very close to the land, and there is constant reference in many Navajo sacred and ordinary discourses to the fact that the Navajo world is bounded by the four sacred mountains. Though wage and salaried labor are now ubiquitous. The unemployment rate is at a minimum of forty per cent; the largest three employers on the reservation are the health industry (6500 jobs), the schools (5500) and Navajo Nation government (4000). For educators, these economic are crucial in two ways: to the community, the role of schools as a source of jobs sometimes takes priority over anything else, and those Navajos who have the best jobs in the schools tend to be the most Anglicized.

Perhaps because of the large size of the Navajo Reservation (and the resulting isolation of many Navajos from Anglophone society), perhaps because of the large number of Navajos, certainly through Navajo commitment to the perpetuation of culture and language, Navajos have maintained the day to day viability of their own language better than any other tribe and Navajo has the best chance at long-term survival. A prominent portion of the mission statement of Navajo Community College calls upon it to "promote, nurture, and enrich the language and culture of the Navajo people".

Navajo has faced powerful and effective language oppression, de jure and de facto. It has been and very often still is proscribed from or held in low esteem in institutional settings such schools, churches, hospitals, and the workplace. Even those advances that have been made in gaining legitimacy for Navajo in the schools over the last fifteen years have only been possible in coalition with those promoting the study of Spanish, other indigenous languages, and "foreign"

languages, and Navajo is still used by some college and university students to fulfill the "foreign language requirement". Many schools will give no credit to a speaker of Navajo; s/he is required to study a third language in college or high school.

Though in the past thirty years the practice of physically punishing children in public and BIA schools for speaking Navajo has been discredited, few of the over 240 schools that educate large numbers of Navajo youth do much that legitimizes or employs the language. The Navajo child who comes to school monolingual or dominant in Navajo is often never given any opportunity to grow intellectually in Navajo. Here, the "standard curriculum" of schools that recognize only the cultural capital of the Anglo culture has succeeded in delegitimizing and crowding out a well-exercised and locally validated body of knowledge, thereby bypassing the needs of the Navajo community. A market-oriented press has never found sufficient profit in publishing materials in Navajo for such an impoverished group, and Navajos have not had the political clout to get Navajo language materials on any state-approved text book list. Even those students who do take Navajo language courses in the few schools or colleges where they are offered have until recently found great difficulty in transferring those courses to other institutions.

The workplace often uses the language skills of Navajos: to sell to the Navajo consumer or buy from the Navajo producer, to deliver health care, or to aid the anthropologist. In fact, all other things being equal, all jobs done on or near the Navajo reservation are much better done by someone who speaks Navajo, and it is astounding that some jobs (e.g., police work) do not absolutely require it. Yet seldom are Navajo language skills compensated adequately. For example, schools that want 'bilingual money' from state departments of education employ Navajo speakers as bilingual aides, but pay them at rates close to minimum wage and usually give them little or no meaningful support, planning, or authority. We still lack ballots in Navajo (though certification of Navajo interpreters at the polls is underway). The dominance of the English language in all political forums is graphically obvious in the contorted shapes of the seven counties that reach into Navajo land from the three conjoined states, all gerrymandered for Anglo control.

There is a small group of schools that have pioneered quality Navajo language work at the elementary and high school level. This is a critical part of the foundation NCC has been able to build upon. Programs at the Rock Point School, the Rough Rock School, and the Fort Defiance Elementary School are some of the best known. At

times each has been strong. Many other schools are making an effort now to advance locally developed quality work, and as more and more Navajos move into administrative positions, this trend should continue. Advances have concomitantly been made at the state and federal levels, with increasingly active involvement of Navajo communities. For the first time, Navajo Language teachers are being endorsed by New Mexico. and now Arizona. A new Arizona mandate requires public schools to teach a second language, and Navajo is one of the languages taught. The U.S. federal courts now require certified Navajo interpreters, and the states have new court standards, though they are weak. These gains are small, but real. Yet the hurdles described above remain.

The role of the Navajo Nation government in this struggle is central, but deeply conflicted. Set up in the thirties to rubber-stamp mineral extraction agreements, the Tribal Council was initially a tool of the BIA. More recently, the shape and texture of limited Navajo sovereignty has brought more critical examination and control into Navajo hands. Yet Navajo Nation government, with its four thousand employees (and an often obstructionist bureaucracy), still struggles to escapes the neo-colonial mold. Navajos who speak English, but not Navajo, have success at almost every level, but monolingual Navajo speakers have had severely limited access. As a macrocosm, the government honestly reflects the ambivalence (perhaps I would better say multi-valence) many Navajos feel toward their own language, and even Navajo-speaking politicians at the higher levels, from school superintendent to tribal official, are often very reluctant to take a leadership position promoting the language. Indeed, although over the years the Navajo Nation has provided millions of dollars to NCC (and thereby to postsecondary Navajo Language work), these funds have never come as part of a regular budget.

There have been advances at the tribal level in the last fifteen years, though each must be evaluated in terms of real impact. For example, official tribal education policy states that Navajo will be taught "to every child, at every grade level, in every school on the Navajo Nation". The reality however is that the tribe does not control the purse strings for the 240 schools, and they have largely ignored this 1982 mandate. Collaboration between state departments of education and tribal officials concerned with language matters is ongoing. For instance, resolutions of the Education Committee of the Navajo Nation Council are addressed to the state departments on targeted matters important to Navajos. Further, the Arizona and New Mexico departments of education depend upon the tribal department to conduct testing and certify fluency of Navajo speakers seeking

bilingual and Navajo language state endorsements. (NCC acts as the agent of the Navajo Nation in this matter.) Yet collaboration between states and tribe is necessarily uneven. Though tribal government (wisely) is unwilling to take over the massive responsibility for funding and supervising all Navajo schools, or of trying to certify teachers, it is at the same time (again wisely) loathe to fully accept the authority of the states and the BIA. The same paradigm affects the relationship between the Navajo Nation and NCC, keeping them often at a lamentable arm's length. Thus, although verbal, heartfelt support for Navajo Language efforts from tribal officials and politicians is the rule, there is still too often insurmountable bureaucratic machinery impeding smooth cooperation.

Ambivalence, grounded in a tribal sovereignty always under negotiation, is both institutional and personal. On one hand affirmative action programs now effectively promote Navajo expertise and Navajo voices. Yet at NCC it is those instructors who are Navajo that are most vehemently vilified by students when they are "too hard". Likewise, the Chairman of the Navajo Nation issued a proclamation that all Headstart centers on the Navajo Nation would use immersion programs, in Navajo. Yet this was done in an absence of curriculum or teacher training programs by which this could be implemented, though work on these is underway, using mainly non-tribal resources. Finally, though most Tribal Council delegates speak Navajo well, almost all paperwork is in English, and the Navajo Nation has never acted to make Navajo the official language of the tribe or even require that road signs be in Navajo.

Some clarity has been cast upon the issue of limits on sovereignty or authority, at the governmental, school, or even personal level by Benjamin Barney, in an analysis of what he calls "administrative prostitution". At the dyad level, an Anglo and a Navajo work together closely in Janus fashion, coordinating their messages and purposes to keep them unified, each depending on the other to reveal the Anglo face/voice or the Navajo face/voice to the public, as each situation dictates. Typically, the Anglo will be the writer and the Navajo the spokesperson. The 'prostitution' portion of the relation comes about when either gives up her/his principles to maintain the unified front (and necessary compromises of authorship) and combination of voices and faces that makes the relationship more powerful than the simple addition of two. Of course, such collaboration is, and will continue to be, very important - no one person can do everything. An unfortunate side effect however is that the growth of each can be stunted by dependence upon the complementary resources of the other. For example,

Navajo-English bilinguals are almost exclusively Navajos, or those of mixed parentage. Anglos don't learn to speak Navajo. This situation that does not bode well for the future of the language, since at least one major portion of an effort to reverse the loss of Navajo will lie in successful NSL. Though one would expect the circumstance of a Navajo to Anglo partnership to be an excellent opportunity for an Anglo to come to speak Navajo, the co-dependence tends to rule against it.

At the governmental level, an analogous love-hate relationship exists between the tribe and the BIA, each of which needs the other in order to exist, but in a relationship of co-dependency. Whenever the tribe publicly shows itself capable of providing for itself in ways that the BIA or other branches of the federal government have traditionally done, ongoing BIA support is threatened. The same sort of relationship exists with state and county governments. In the climate of this political dynamic Navajo impact on Southwestern political matters is predictably marginalized. During the struggle to establish the Arizona Foreign Language mandate, which has opened the door for Navajo in many state funded schools on the Navajo Nation, the tribe could only send infrequent, mixed messages, while the opposition nearly won the day with the argument against unfunded mandates. During the struggle about the Official English amendment to the Arizona constitution, there was no organized effort by the Navajo Nation to oppose it. (Despite the efforts of a couple of tribal officials, there is at the time of this writing no mass opposition to the proposed federal amendment of the same type.) In the ebb and flow of ideologies and interests, in which at times there is an opportunity for advance, and at other times one must fight a rear-guard action restricting loss, it is painful to find an ambivalence coming from those who would most naturally be expected to be working for Navajo interests, yet who work within groups and institutions that are fundamentally compromised.

Thus progress in the Navajo Nation context is uneven, based on commitment, energy, and organization. A blend of opportunity and courage brings advances; when the tribe put together a coalition of southwestern colleges to get Navajos certified as teachers, the director of the tribe's education department, Anita Pfeiffer, decreed that scholarships for this program would go only to Navajo speakers. Further she decreed that students would be required to take five courses in Navajo language from NCC. This single decision has significantly expanded the community of Navajo literate teachers ready to use effective methods and materials for teaching Navajo. Yet Ms. Pfeiifer absorbed a great deal of criticism for years thereafter by

those who called these requirements overly restrictive, as she did later when she took the responsible position that teachers who seek bilingual certification must be not only fluent and articulate, but also literate in Navajo. Of the other Navajos or Anglos in similar positions of authority, for example as superintendents of large school districts, only a precious few have openly supported the Navajo language. Many districts, especially the border districts centered in Page, AZ, Gallup, NM, Farmington, NM, and Blanding, UT have been hostile or persistently obstructionist toward bringing quality Navajo language work into their schools, despite very large populations of Navajo students.

In addition to such issues of the local neo-colonial structures which Navajo language work must struggle to transform, one must add the context of institutional activities that study and report on Navajo, and Navajos, for many varied purposes. Some of these institutional activities are anthropological, or linguistic, with the academic careers of its practitioners dependent upon successfully addressing audiences naive about Navajo and Navajos. Such investigators can be much more sure of themselves before these more naive audiences than they can be on the Navajo Nation, and can thereby reside in more comfortable urban settings. The same pattern often applies to non-academic writers who make a career out of telling stories about Navajos, fiction or non-fiction, such as Tony Hillerman or Rodney Barker. The pattern holds also for many parts of the publishing industry, even those portions generally considered accurate and authoritative in many circles. For example, the Smithsonian magazine recently published an article on the Navajo Code Talkers, in which a number of Navajo words were printed. Yet Smithsonian staunchly resisted using the accurate standard Navajo orthography, choosing instead to stylistically pander to a larger audience. A laudable counter-example to this behavior is that of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names, which recently has opened its official recognition processes to non-English orthographies.

There are hopeful signs, in this time of enhanced telecommunication and easier travel, that the broad field of "Navajo Studies", pursued for so many valid reasons, can begin to have a critical unity of structure that will render it at once more accurate and more responsible to the community under investigation. For instance, there have now been nine annual Navajo Studies Conferences, usually attracting five hundred participants, held on or near the Navajo Nation. This conference attracts a large Navajo audience, and blends practitioners, academics, people with extensive traditional knowledge (though not nearly enough of these),

educators, and students. It's structure represents a hopeful advance toward an academia to come.

Other institutional influences on the Navajo language come from many quarters. For example, some local radio stations allow broadcasts in Navajo, though most only at very odd hours and for very short periods (an exception the Farmington station KNDN is entirely in Navajo all of the time, other than when its country music is playing). One consistent supporter of the language has been KTNN, the tribally owned 50,000 Watt AM station. KTNN persists in keeping a large portion of its programming in Navajo, though sometimes it is the target of criticism for its announcers not speaking as fluently and articulately as some of their listeners. Many NCC students have been given access to the microphone to read Navajo compositions which are required for their courses.

For more than century Navajo language work has also been influenced by the Christian churches, some of which promulgate virulent anti-Navajo attitudes, and some of which have hymnals in Navajo and integrate Navajo practices into their worship (some even once developed their own orthographies). The strong presence of the Native American Church, which welcomes Navajo language, and of the ceremonies of the traditional medicine men (over one thousand still practicing) are pervasive influences as well.

A final sociolinguistic issue that must be taken into consideration is the nature of the diglossia of the Navajo community. This issue can not be fully covered here. There is a shift ongoing in which an ever increasing portion of Navajos are monolingual in English, English is the power language for most settings and functions (seldom is a memo, a resolution, or sign written in Navajo), and there are few if any communities in which Navajo is spoken in all settings. Of course, certain functions simply cannot be carried out in English, from the establishing of K'é (the stitching together of family and clan) to the conduct of traditional healing ceremonies. As long as these functions continue to be carried out, the language will certainly be used. Yet many settings where the maintenance of Navajo dominance would be considered crucial have already become almost exclusively English. For example, the children of many of the people who make a living as Navajo language teachers do not speak Navajo; it is not spoken to them in the home.

NCC'S NAVAJO LANGUAGE PROGRAM

It is in this context that the Navajo Language Program thrives. It is rooted at Navajo Community College, at its two main sites in

Tsaile, AZ and Shiprock, NM. NCC was the first of the tribal controlled community colleges, funded directly through the Interior Department in 1968 by the Navajo Community College Act. The college is also chartered by the Navajo Nation and accredited by the North Central Association. The Board of Regents is entirely Navajo, with appointed and elected members. As mentioned before, the mission statement of the college strongly charges it to focus on work in Navajo studies, and there has been much done over the twenty-eight years of the school. Over the last ten years, a number of factors have provided constraint, opportunity and guidance.

Of course, NCC is notoriously poor, and the salaries it pays professors lag behind those of local public school teachers, usually by several thousand dollars. Further, the campuses are in rural, insular locations, sometimes creating social tension. The last fifteen years of funding cuts have made intracollegiate politics rigorous. Thus, the issue of support for the Center for Diné Studies (which houses the Navajo Language Program) is often a concrete issue of allocation of very limited resources. There is no tenure, and little fat in any program. Decisions to expand a program often mean the shrinking (or abolishing) of some other program, and issues of student load, transferability of courses, number and employability of graduates, and mission of the college are examined with great care. Ambivalence about the worth of Navajo language study is quickly revealed in bold relief.

During this time, many Navajos and others at NCC have played roles in the development of the NLP. At one point (11/89) the president of the college (Laurence Gishey) hired three new full-time professors at one time, positions that others felt were more critically needed elsewhere at the college. There have been recurring attempts to reduce the size of the NLP faculty, to use materials funds for other purposes, and to restrict offerings. During the advising and scheduling process, some have expressed, and acted upon, sincere feelings that to give students Navajo language classes is to waste their time. Attempts by the NLP to put Navajo on an equal footing with English for the satisfaction of the Communications portion of the General Requirements of the college were resisted fiercely, though unsuccessfully, at many levels. Attempts to install a stipend on NCC salaries for those who read and write Navajo well were defeated several times. Until the onset of the NCC's Diné Teacher Education Program (beginning Fall, 1996), no course outside of the Center for Diné Studies has yet employed written Navajo to any meaningful extent.

Yet dozens of people have taken the often risky position of promoting the NLP in meaningful ways. The Center for Diné Studies has had unwavering and courageous leadership from David Begay, Harry Walters, Herbert Benally, and Bernice Casaus. The personnel in our community campus programs (which offer extensive outlying courses) have many times committed resources where there were none. Poorly paid adjunct instructors and overworked bureaucrats have driven hundreds of miles per week to deliver quality instruction and support. Other parts of the college have contributed hardware and technical support, sharing of training opportunities, and supportive recruitment, scholarship and advisement help.

The clarification of our program goals has been founded on several major precepts. One of the first is the NLP is a language program, not a linguistics program. For limited purposes, a good analogy is that of English programs at universities. These programs would never bring in a linguist to head their department, nor would they accept the research and instructional goals of a linguistics program as their own. The highest goals of a good language program are the promotion of fluency and articulateness, literacy and quality composition. If work in these areas is not accomplished with rigor and depth, a language program is one in name only. Thus, the highest priority, the brightest and most energetic scholars and teachers, and the greatest amount of time must be focused here. As contrasted to a linguistics program, a language program will concern itself more with poetry than with phonology, more with culture than with information science.

This is not to say that the NLP has not benefited from the insights of linguistics, especially Navajo linguistics. There is hardly an area of linguistics from which our language majors and prospective teachers do not glean important insights or have access to substantial findings. For example, in lexicology, morphology, and syntax, the dictionaries of Young and Morgan provide NCC with an entire course, our NAV 401, on the use of the dictionary and descriptive grammar. In phonology, phonemics, phonetics, and orthography, the work of Young (1968) and Kari (1976) is used in our NAV 289 course to provide detailed insights into the Navajo sound system and its relationship to the writing system. This same course uses work by Yule, Sapir, Crystal, and Werner, Manning, and Begishe, and others to both introduce language majors and teachers to concepts of linguistics and to show them major applications of these concepts to Navajo language study in each area. There are dozens of other areas in which findings in linguistics have impacted our language program,

in syllabi, professional training, and the provision of many kinds of resources.

Other major concepts that have lent guidance, creativity, and rigor to our program have been the recently clarified and deepened ideas about language proficiency (especially as espoused by the ACTFL group), the whole language movement, and the advances over the last twenty years in foreign language methodology. Our thirteen NLP courses are in a two-track system, separating speakers from non-speakers. Our placement issues are fairly complex, since our students are ninety-nine per cent Navajo. Three quarters of the six hundred taking courses in any one semester are clearly speakers. The others range from non-Navajos who know nothing of the language or the culture to Navajos who understand well and have severe limitations in production. For placement issues, and for issues of establishing clear goals for students and professors, the ACTFL guidelines have proven indispensable; they have also become an important element of our teacher-training materials. For our courses in writing (for native speakers), and in teacher training, the rich material that has sprung forth from the whole language movement has enriched our forum in innumerable ways. Finally, for becoming more effective in our NSL instruction (four of our courses are for non-speakers) the methods that have been developed over the last twenty years for foreign language instruction have proven very useful to us.

We have composed thirteen courses, and have now used them many dozens of times. The four courses for non-native speakers of Navajo are NAV 101, 102, 201, and 202. No true non-speaker can ever hope to learn to speak Navajo well by taking only these courses, but we can get most students into the lower intermediate levels. Though most students enter this sequence at 101, we allow some students to come in at higher levels, if they are what we refer to as "latent speakers", Navajos who understand a lot but speak little or none. Some day we should develop courses in Navajo language arts, more appropriate to this audience.

Our courses for speakers start with the literacy and composition courses, NAV 211, 212, and 301. In the future, we should be moving away from teaching basic literacy, as the elementary and secondary schools begin doing their job appropriately, but for now most students coming to us have no Navajo literacy. Students finishing 301 must write a well-organized 300 word descriptive composition in Navajo in a two hour period, with more than 70% of their words spelled perfectly. Beyond these courses, those students who want to receive our AA degree in Navajo

language take our Navajo Linguistics course, NAV 289 (described above), our Navajo Grammar course, NAV 401 (also see above), and an upper level Navajo culture course, NIS 371, in which they must write their papers in Navajo. Beyond this, those students who wish to get state endorsements for teaching Navajo must take two four semester-hour courses, NAV 350, Teaching Navajo to the Native Speaker, and NAV 351, Teaching Navajo as a Second Language. Both of these courses include teaching practicums.

These eight teacher endorsement courses (including NIS 371) are the core of our program. (Two other courses, NAV 231, Navajo Medical Terminology, and NAV 478, The Athabaskan Roots of Navajo, are at the developing edges of new program thrusts in comparative linguistics and translating / interpreting.) Much administrative work went into convincing the state departments of education to accept them as satisfying state competency requirements. In order for NCC to offer courses at the junior and senior levels (300 and 400 level courses), it was also necessary to satisfy the accreditation requirements of the North Central Association. Finally, the development effort has required that we spend years constructing, improving, and maintaining the courses, learning to teach them well and finding materials, standards, and appropriate pedagogy. The acquisition of books and machines (including computers), the recruiting and funding of students (often with significant tribal support), and myriad other issues were part of this effort.

With these efforts, and associated research projects, NCC has developed a forum of teachers, students and other scholars who rigorously investigate and create with Navajo on the Navajo Nation, Navajos addressing Navajos. The academic processes at NCC directly access the resources of the community, building the Core Forum of increasingly expert and active intellectuals. The rigor of the work is enforced externally (through constant examination of all work done on Navajo) and internally (as all must put their work before a highly critical audience motivated by an intent to immediately put knowledge to work. Authority increasingly resides with Navajos, and the functions of promoting and perpetuating the language come to the forefront. As the NLP looks to the future, promoting the growth of a new literature, securing permanent venues for the language, and growing towards bachelors and masters programs, human and institutional resources are in place, and the potential is unprecedented.

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